

Transition Times



Child and Youth Programs
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Transition Times

The Navy Caregivers Training Program offers many ideas to help you provide the most beneficial program for children in your care. Among these ideas are suggestions for effective classroom management (i.e., room arrangement, planning a practical daily schedule, following a consistent routine).

Well planned transition times are an important part of classroom management. Successful transition times contribute to the overall quality of an effective developmental program for children.

Transitions are defined as any time children are moving from one activity to another. Transitions may be part of planned routines or they may occur when children are moving spontaneously from one interest center to another. The goal is to accomplish transitions smoothly, without commotion or confusion. An added benefit is that caregivers, generally find by allowing for transitions in the daily schedule and by including children in the process, constructive activities increase and behavior problems decrease.

When do transition times occur?

First look at the daily schedule of activities. When are the transitional times in your routine? Do these times require extra planning or supervision in order to maintain a sense of calm in the room? Where will the children be during these transition times? Who will lead the transition time? The caregiver? The children?

Possible transition times include:

- arrivals/departures
- before and after mealtimes (breakfast, lunch, snacks)
- indoor to outdoor activities and vice versa
- emergency evacuations
- bathroom times/diapering
- preparing for nap time/getting up from nap time
- floor play to circle time
- circle time to interest centers children moving from one interest center to another
- going from a loud activity to a quiet activity
- small group activity to cleanup--one caregiver
- entire group to outside or a meal - two caregivers.

What is involved in transition times?

Like all activities, transition times can be used for learning and reinforcing concepts and skills. Caregivers, should watch to see what the child is trying to do and provide the necessary support to help the child accomplish the task. There's an art to knowing which children truly need a hand when they ask for help; which ones could use help and won't ask; and which ones need a gentle challenge. Attentive caregivers allow children to do what they are capable of doing and assist with tasks that are frustrating.

Like all aspects of child development programming, a certain amount of planning for differences in ages and abilities must take place. Ideas to keep in mind when working with a specific age group follow:

Infants/pretoddlers

- Transitions will be more caregiver directed for infants and pretoddlers, than for older children.
- Plan for individual schedules--caregivers must react to each child's sleeping, eating and diapering needs.
- Tell the child what you are doing before you do it.
- Talk to the children constantly.
- Remove children from cribs as soon as they wake, if possible.
- Remove children from highchairs or infant seats as soon as possible after meals.
- Talk to infants/toddlers during diapering.

- Look for signals that infants are tired of one activity and ready to move on to another.
- Guide pretoddlers toward the next activity; don't force them.
- Avoid crowding and ensure that there are enough toys to reduce the possibilities of biting incidents and other problems.

Toddlers/preschoolers

- Establish routines and simple positive rules to follow during transitions.
- The room is the children's own special place, and each one shares in the responsibility of caring for it.
- Reduce the amount of time the children spend waiting in line.
- Keep children's hands as busy as possible; this will help reduce the chance of children using their hands to create problems.
- Finger plays and singing usually work best for transition time for children.

Special needs

If children with special needs are present, extra time, as appropriate, should be built into the schedule for transitioning. They may need assistance from caregivers in completing tasks (i.e. picking up toys, hygiene requirements, meal service, getting dressed). You may need to plan ahead more carefully to ensure these children have successful experiences.

How will you handle transition times?

If transition times are chaotic in your classroom, you should consider the following questions.

- Is there a familiar routine for the children? Children feel more secure when their daily schedule is familiar. By knowing the order of daily activities, children learn to rely on both their environment and their caregivers.
- Do the children receive enough notice that a transition time is approaching?
- Do the children know what is expected of them during transitions?
- Have simple, positive guidelines been established?
- Is everyone expected to do things at the same time, or are allowances made for individual differences?
- Do caregivers work as a team in planning and carrying out transitions?
- Do transition times receive the same emphasis as any other activity, or are they rushed? Are they too long?
- Do caregivers use creative techniques to keep transition times fun?

Ensuring a smooth transition time

There are several ways in which caregivers can ensure that transition times will run smoothly.

- Be aware of children who have difficulty separating from their parents in the morning. Give them special attention to make the transition into the classroom less stressful for the parent and child, as well as the other children in the classroom.

- Establish a daily routine so that children know what to do on their own.

- Give children sufficient notice prior to clean-up time: “You have time for one more pegboard,” or “There is just enough time to finish that painting, but not to start a new one.”

- Give children plenty of notice when a transition time is approaching (i.e., “In five minutes we will be going outside,” or “In ten minutes we will be closing the painting table to get ready for lunch,” or “When the timer goes off we are cleaning up”).

- Provide clear directions to children during transition times and be sure expectations are age-appropriate.

- Try to avoid moving all children from one activity to another as a group. For example, as

individual children finish their lunch, they can get a book to read on the carpet until cots are put down for nap-time. Or, as children finish in the bathroom, they can return to the classroom to put on their coats.

(Note: Be sure to agree ahead of time on which caregiver will be in the classroom and which caregiver will monitor the bathroom.)

- Whenever possible, be flexible by allowing children extra time to complete activities. For example, if several of the children have spent all of free play setting up a grocery store and need time to complete it, allow them this extra time. Other children can be asked to help clean up the block center or art area.

- Treat clean-up time as an experience that is valuable in and of itself. Allow sufficient time so children will feel successful when cleaning up.

- Involve children in setting up meal-times and cleaning up afterwards, cleaning up after art, and putting the toys back on where they belong. This not only helps smooth the transition but also teaches children the importance of responsibility.

Effective transition time techniques that work

Ensure you have a full repertoire of fingerplays, songs, sayings, and puppets to keep transition times fun. Instead of having children wait idly, use transitional times constructively. Songs can be sung, games can be played. Be creative in offering activities that will stimulate the children. The following are examples of “time filling” activities.

- Sing while walking to the playground, or walk like monkeys, bears, mice, etc. Count how many steps it takes, play follow the leader, walk in a wavy line, etc.

- Sing while walking to use the bathroom, at clean-up time, or during other transitional times.

- Utilize puppets--children will often listen and respond more readily to a puppet than they will to a caregiver.

- Plan the daily schedule so that children do not have to sit and wait at the tables. If the food arrives late, let the children count the plates, count the bowls, the cups, count the children, ask what the plates are made of, do fingerplays. Ask the children what they think their meal will be. Discuss where milk or juice come from and the positive benefits they provide. These activities encourage learning and help children behave appropriately.

- Make up a crazy story that will capture the children’s interest and imagination. Or better yet, let the children make up a story. Make up songs to standard children’s tunes that are easily recognizable. Change the words to fit the situation. Here are several examples:

- “We’re picking up the blocks, we’re picking up the blocks, hi ho the dairy-o, we’re picking up the blocks.”

- “Now we’re picking up the blocks, red ones, green ones, yellow ones, blue (twinkle, twinkle little star).”

- “We’re putting on our coats, we’re putting on our coats, hi ho the dairy-o, we’re walking to the door.”

- Memorize a few standard action songs to use as attention-getters and crowd calmers. For instance:

- Open shut them
- Grandmas glasses
- Skimmerink a dink a doo

- Follow the leader--start patting your head, shoulders, clap your hands, march in place, snap your fingers, touch your nose, etc., (all without talking), until all the children are doing what you are doing and are quiet.

Just a few reminders

- If children are getting restless, think of alternatives to shouting. For example, try whispering. Whispering is more likely to help get the children's attention. Caregivers are role models for all behavior. If the caregiver shouts, so will the children.
- When addressing a child, always walk up to the child and speak to him/her at their eye level.
- Do not get into a "power play" with a child. The caregiver will never win, the child loses self-esteem, and the child will not learn anything about self-reliance, self-help skills, etc. All children need to feel as if they have some control over what is happening to them. Give the child choices that are acceptable to you.
- Always use the positive guidance techniques that are discussed in the Navy Caregivers Training Program, Module 10.
- Start an activity quickly like jogging, exercising or jumping. This technique is effective in control over a group of children. If, however, you see that the children are not responding stop immediately and gain control. Try a second transitional activity until order is restored.
- Compliment the children who are behaving the way you would like (i.e., "I like the way Tina is putting the blocks on the shelf," or "Marty put his book away and is getting his coat"). This is very effective in soliciting cooperation from the rest of the group.

Some final thoughts

- Build on success. Plan to change the daily schedule if needed.
- Be aware of those activities that are flowing smoothly as well as those that are not. Stay with a plan for awhile before making changes. Try more than one option before settling on a change.
- Visualize a smooth-running daily flow. Be patient. Believe it will happen.
- Empower the children. Remember, it's their room. You'll enjoy yourself and end the day feeling happy, successful, less frustrated and less tired!

**Fingerplays
Songs,
Resource
Books**

Music: A Way of Life for the Young Child, by Kathleen Bayless and Marjorie Ramsey.

Hello Toes! Movement Games for Children, by Anna Lief Barlin and Nurit Kalev.

Creative Activities for Young Children (4th Ed.), by Mary Mayesky

Finger Frolics, by Liz Cromwell.

Sing a Song of Popcorn, selected by B. Schenk.

Animal Piggyback Songs, compiled by Jean Warren.

Music for Ones and Twos, by Tom Glazer.

1*2*3 Puppets, by Jean Warren.

With a Hop, Skip and a Jump, by Deborah V. Smith.

A Moving Experience, by Teresa Benzwie.

Quiet Times, by Louise Binder Scott.

Think of Something Quiet, by Clare Cherry.

Baby Games, by Elaine Martin.

Toddler Theme-A-Saurus, by Jean Warren

More Things to Do with Toddlers and Twos, by Karen Miller.

Creative Play Activities for Children With Disabilities, by Lisa Rappaport Morris and Linda Schulz.

Adapting Early Childhood Curricula for Children with Special Needs, by Ruth Cook. Annette Tessier, and Virginia Ambruster.

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